



# Electoral Matters Committee

Tue 9 Aug  
2022  
6.30 pm

Council Chamber,  
Redditch Town Hall,  
Walter Stranz Square  
Redditch  
B98 8AH

**REDDITCH** BOROUGH COUNCIL

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**If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact  
Jess Bayley-Hill**

**Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH  
Tel: (01527) 64252 (Ext. 3072)  
e.mail: [jess.bayley-hill@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:jess.bayley-hill@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)**

## **GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS**

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**At the current time, seating at the meeting will be placed in such a way as to achieve as much space as possible for social distancing to help protect meeting participants.**

**Please note that this is a public meeting.**

**If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers, please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.**

### **GUIDANCE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS ATTENDING MEETINGS IN PERSON**

Members and Officers who still have access to lateral flow tests (LFTs) are encouraged to take a test on the day of the meeting. Meeting attendees who do not have access to LFTs are encouraged not to attend the meeting if they have common cold symptoms or any of the following common symptoms of Covid-19 on the day of the meeting; a high temperature, a new and continuous cough or a loss of smell and / or taste.

The meeting venue will be fully ventilated, and Members and officers may need to consider wearing appropriate clothing in order to remain comfortable during proceedings.

### **PUBLIC ATTENDANCE**

Members of the public will be able to access the meeting to observe proceedings if they wish to do so. Seating will be placed in such a way as to achieve as much space as possible for social distancing to help protect meeting participants. It should be noted that members of the public who choose to attend in person do so at their own risk.

Members of the public who still have access to lateral flow tests (LFTs) are encouraged to take a test on the day of the meeting. Meeting attendees who do not have access to LFTs are encouraged not to attend the meeting if they have common cold symptoms or any of the following common symptoms of Covid-19 on the day of the meeting; a high temperature, a new and continuous cough or a loss of smell and / or taste.

### **Notes:**

**Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded.**



# Electoral Matters

Tuesday, 9th August, 2022

6.30 pm

Council Chamber Town Hall

## Agenda

### Membership:

Cllrs:                      Matthew Dormer                      Tom Baker-Price  
   (Chair)                                      David Thain  
   Peter Fleming (Vice-  
   Chair)  
   Joe Baker

**1. Apologies for absence and named substitutes**

**2. Declarations of Interest**

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

**3. Minutes of the Last Meeting (Pages 1 - 4)**

**4. Polling Place Changes Review - Winyates Ward (Pages 5 - 18)**

**5. To consider any urgent business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chair, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting**

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# Electoral Matters Committee

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Tuesday, 15th February,  
2022

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), and Councillors Aled Evans, Andrew Fry and Mike Rouse

### Officers:

Sue Hanley and Darren Whitney (on Microsoft Teams)

### Democratic Services Officers:

Joanne Gresham

### 5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gemma Monaco.

### 6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 7. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

#### RESOLVED that

**the minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

### 8. POLLING PLACE CHANGES FOR MAY 2022

As Councillor Aled Evans was running late, at this point, there was a brief adjournment of the meeting between 17:02 and 17:11.

Chair

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The Electoral Services Manager introduced a report on the subject of Polling Place Changes for May 2022 in Winyates Ward. Members were advised that due to time constraints there would not be sufficient time to complete all of the stages of a full consultation. However, it was confirmed that voters within Winyates Ward would be consulted on their voting preference for future polling.

During consideration of the report the following was highlighted for Members' consideration:

- That Relevant Authorities (such as Redditch Borough Council) must ensure that any polling places were accessible to all electors including those who were disabled and members of minority or disadvantaged groups. In addition to this it was important to consider any Climate Change implications and to minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles.
- Several alternative sites had been suggested to officers including "The Link" Office, "The Space" Unit and the old Winyates Locality Office. In addition to these sites, the Arrow Valley Visitors Centre had also been suggested as a potential venue however was not considered a possibility as its location is a long distance from the residential area of the polling district and would be difficult for electors to get to.
- Polling District WIA could use "The Space" Unit provided the leak in the roof of the unit could be located and repaired in time for the May 2022 elections. Officers were unable to confirm whether this leak could be identified and rectified in time for the May 2022 elections. In addition to this, there was the risk that, if there had been particularly heavy rain the day before the elections this could significantly impact on the state of the roof and cause further damage to the hanging ceiling which had already suffered a collapse of several of the ceiling tiles. It was further noted that should adverse weather experienced on the day of the elections any repairs would not be able to be undertaken and fixed on that day. All of these situations could potentially lead to lower confidence levels for the electors within the polling district. It was confirmed that "The Link" would work as a polling place for Polling District WIB however residents would have to cross over a bus lane to access this site. Officers reported that

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should a snap general election be called neither of the above sites would be suitable and the polling places would have to revert to being located within the two schools currently used.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- Whether the Council was legally obligated to move the polling places if requested – It was confirmed by officers that there was no legal obligation to move the polling places however officers always took note of any requests by the Local Education Authority or schools regarding polling places and these were brought to Members for consideration. It was noted that requests such as these were generally received from schools in the run up to elections as schools were keen for their pupils to not miss any of their schooling time. Members were in agreement that in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns it was important to consider the loss of additional school days on top of the already lost days that had been experienced over the previous two years. However, there was the potential that complaints might be received were the polling places moved to unsuitable location.
- The use of portable cabins as an alternative site for polling places – officers informed the Committee that due to the pandemic and the use of portable cabins as Covid testing sites there was a shortage of portable cabins. These units were not considered ideal for polling, by officers, due to cost and staffing difficulties; furthermore no suitable locations for units as polling places had been found.
- The central location of the schools as polling places – some Members expressed that the schools that were currently used were at the heart of the community and were most accessible for all residents.

Following a detailed discussion Members

**RECOMMENDED that**

**“The Space” Unit or the old Winyates locality Office be used as the polling place for WIA for May 2022; and**

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**“The Link” Office be used as the polling place for WIB for May 2022; and**

**voters attending the station on 5 May be asked their preference for future polling.**

The Meeting commenced at 5.00 pm  
and closed at 5.42 pm



**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE  
2022**

9 August

**Polling Place Changes Review - Winyates Ward**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Ashley Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Report Author	Job Title: Darren Whitney Contact email: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881650
Wards Affected	Winyates Ward
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Yes
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	N/A
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1.1 the Committee keeps the current arrangements for polling using Tenacres Children's Centre for WIA and Arrow Valley First School for WIB;**

**OR**

**1.2 the Committee holds a review including consultation on the polling place options within the report.**

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The report sets out alternatives for two polling places, after a temporary change for the May 2022 Local Elections agreed by the Electoral Matters Committee held on 15 February 2022.
- 2.2 "The Space" Unit was used as the polling place for the WIA polling district and "The Link" Office was used as the polling place for the WIB polling district.
- 2.3 In agreeing to review the change the Committee asked an exit survey be taken regarding the preference for future voting in the affected polling districts.

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**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are some minor financial implications for the Council which arise from this report and would depend on which recommendation is chosen.
- 3.2 If a portable building is chosen there would be a cost burden of approximately £1,200.

**4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate polling places rests with the Council (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Redditch Borough Council has delegated full relevant powers to this Electoral Matters Committee.
- b) Decisions about the situation of Polling Stations within designated Polling Places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations and the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.2 "Relevant authorities" (such as Redditch Borough Council) must
- "a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the Constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances"; and
- "b) seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled and, when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons. If it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal, then every reasonable adjustment must be undertaken to provide access for all electors."
- 4.3 The Elections Act 2022 will place new considerations for Local Authorities in regard to polling places. Secondary legislation is still to be introduced but key considerations are accessibility and checking voter's ID to ensure polling stations have suitable space to allow polling station staff to check documents and provide a privacy screen or separate area for confidential conversations.

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**5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS****Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 None as this report deals with statutory functions.

**Climate Change Implications**

- 5.2 It is preferable that choice of polling place location can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles.
- 5.3 Emissions and carbon footprint should be reduced as far as possible.

**6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS****Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Stations. The Returning Officer will have a general responsibility to provide equipment to support people with a range of disabilities in the polling station.

**Operational Implications**

- 6.2 Both polling places were situated in the Winyates Centre, as mentioned in paragraph 2.2. "The Space" Unit was used as the polling place for the WIA polling district and "The Link" Office was used as the polling place for the WIB polling district.
- 6.3 When collecting their ballot paper at the May elections electors were offered a survey that could be completed in the polling station or returned in the post. A total of 91 surveys for WIA were returned and 49 for WIB.

**WIA**

From the 91 replies 67 preferred "The Space" as a polling station, which compares to 25 who would like to see a return to Tenacres Children's Centre.

Those that wanted to return to Tenacres Children's Centre were, in the main, from the eastern edge of the polling district.

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The Polling Staff that worked in the polling station in May were happy with the premises as a polling station.

A Ward Councillor had suggested using the lounge within Ibstock House, Retirement Housing in Ibstock Close.

Officers have visited Ibstock House and are happy that this could be used as a polling place in future.

The only drawback in using this as a polling place is that Ibstock Close is to the North of the polling district and complaints maybe made from electors in the southern area.

**WIB**

Electors that responded to the question regarding the future location for polling 30 wanted to continue with the use of 'The Link' office and 16 wished to return to Arrow Valley First School.

The largest number of comments received related to the small size of the polling station this was echoed by polling staff who found that the polling station was far too small to deal with the through put of electors wishing to vote.

This was also noted by the Returning Officer and Polling Station Inspectors visiting the station.

The electorate for WIB is increasing and to follow Electoral Commission guidelines three poll clerks will be required.

Due to lack of space officers do not recommend using the 'The Link' office for future polls. It should be made clear that there would not be adequate space to hold a Parliamentary Election at this office.

As previously, a Ward Councillor suggested alternatives using a portable building on either Edgmond Close or Badger Close within the polling district.

Officers have visited both sites and although Badger Close would be too small to site a portable building one could be placed in Edgmond Close.

The site is owed by Worcestershire County Council so agreement would need to be sourced, in addition officers had concerns about noise from the generator to nearby housing.

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- 6.4 An additional option that could be considered is to make “The Space” the polling place for WIB and move WIA electors to Ibstock House. After visiting Ibstock House officers have concluded that both premises would be of sufficient size to use for a Parliamentary Election.
- 6.5 The (Acting) Returning Officer must make a submission regarding current and any proposed polling stations. She has raised her concerns in respect of “The Link” office. She would like to reiterate her previous comments that whilst noting that the schools are exceptionally keen for an alternative location, change cannot be at the detriment of electors if the alternatives are not completely adequate and would strongly suggest that voter preference is the basis for polling places in these polling districts in future years.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 Normally any changes agreed must be likely to be sustainable for a reasonable number of years, as frequent changes of Polling Station are not helpful for electors and undermine their knowledge of, and confidence in, electoral systems. However as Redditch Borough Council is going through a ward boundary review a full polling places review will need to be held before the implementation of the results of the ward boundary review.
- 7.2 Choice of Polling Place / Polling Station should not give rise to significant grounds of complaint which might put election results at risk of challenge.
- 7.3 The (Acting) Returning Officer must provide adequate levels and standards of staffing to secure proper polling arrangements.
- 7.4 If a portable building is to be considered for voting it should be noted that the Elections Act is bringing in a duty for polling stations to have a private area for checking voters ID. As mentioned in paragraph 4.3 officers are awaiting secondary legislation and Electoral Commission guidance but it might make the use of portable buildings in certain areas redundant.

**8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Appendix 1 – Polling District WIA and WIB  
Appendix 2 – Survey Results

**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**  
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Local Government Boundary Commission for England and Electoral  
Commission Guidance.

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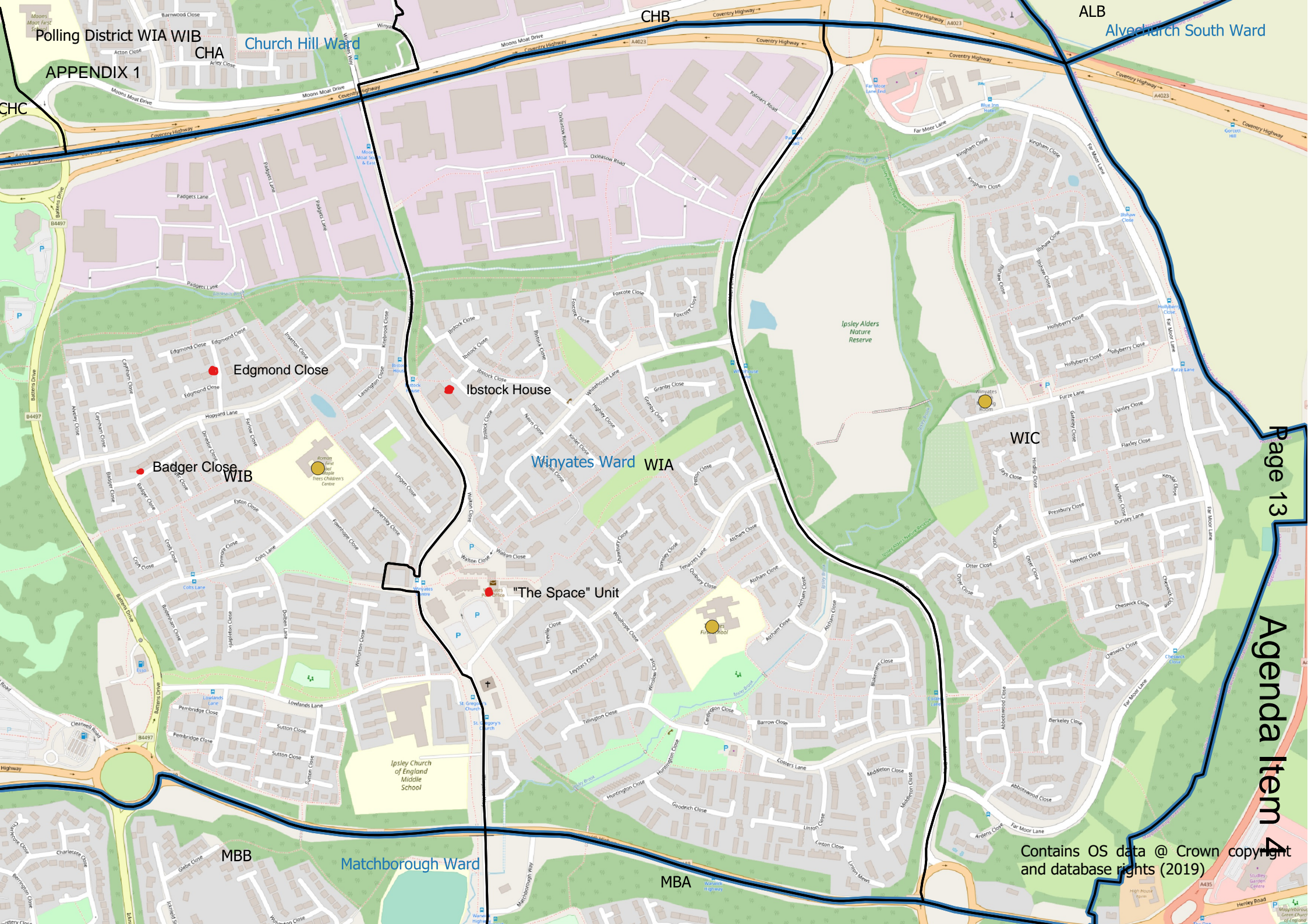
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**9. REPORT SIGN OFF**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name and Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Portfolio Holder		
Head of Service		
Financial Services	Pater Carpenter	28 July 2022
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan	28 July 2022

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Polling District WIA WIB

Church Hill Ward

CHB

ALB

Alvechurch South Ward

APPENDIX 1

CHA

CHC

Edmond Close

Ibstock House

Winyates Ward WIA

Badger Close

WIB

WIC

'The Space' Unit

Ipsley Church of England Middle School

MBB

Matchborough Ward

MBA

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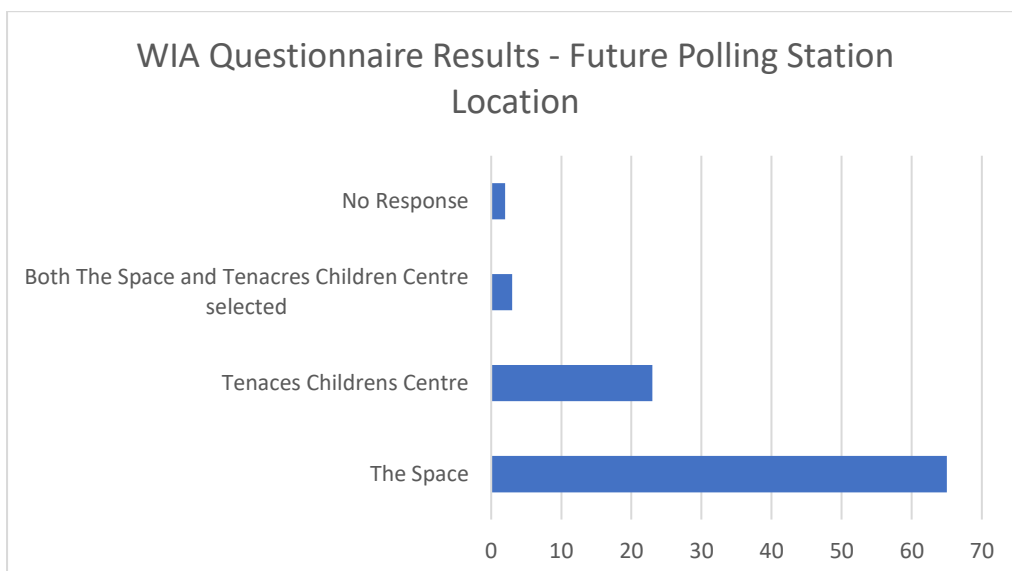
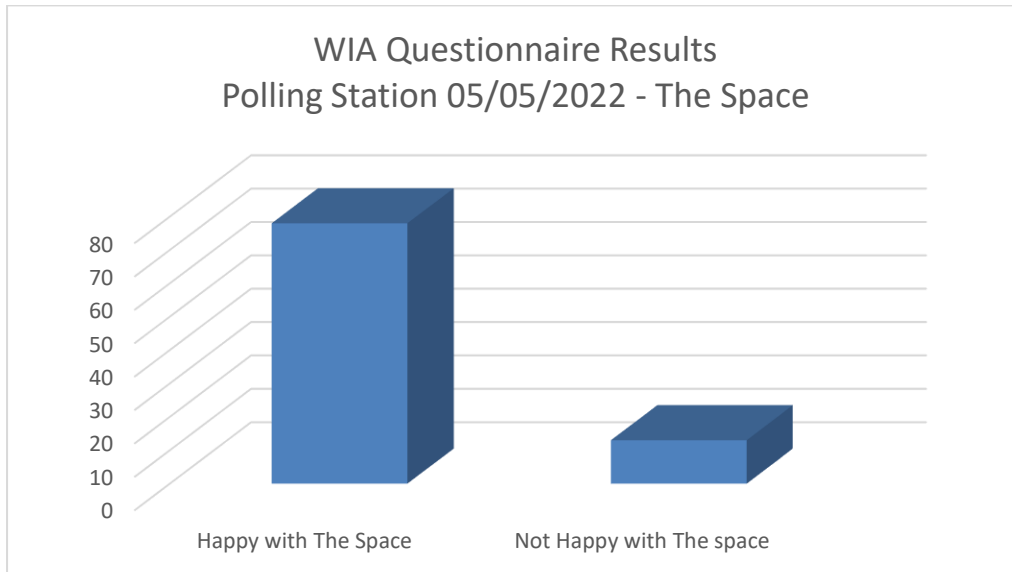
Agenda Item 4

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## Appendix 2

### Survey results from Electors 5 May 2022

#### WIA



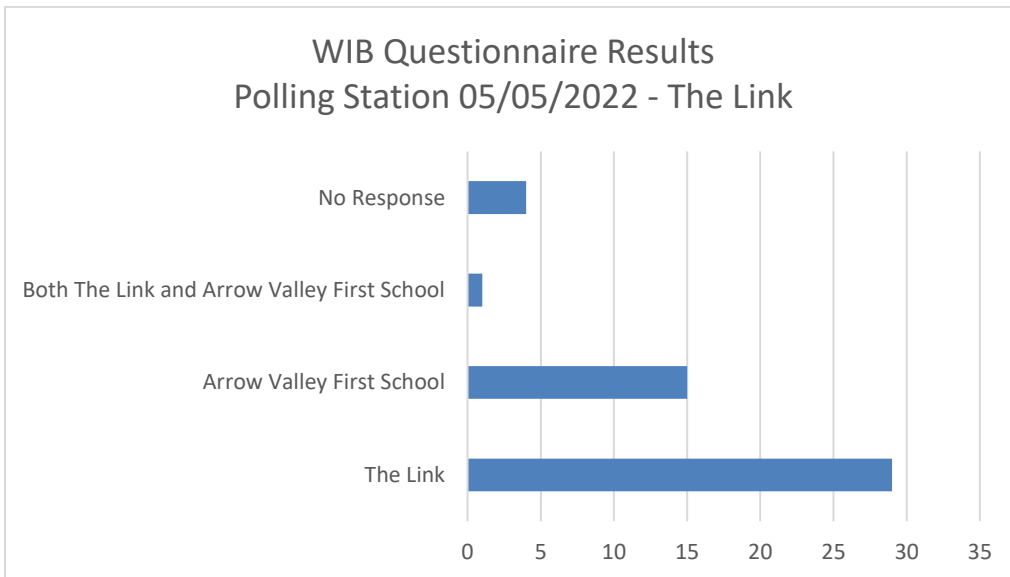
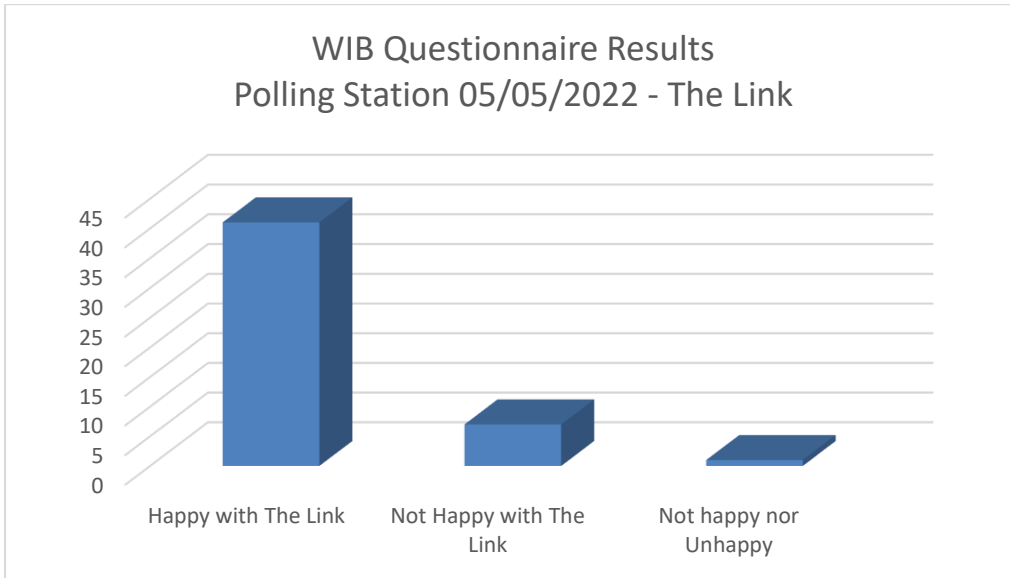
### Comments regarding “The Space” WIA

THE SPACE IS BETTER FOR VOTING YOU'VE GOT MORE COVER IF IT RAINS

I HAVE NO OBJECTION TO THE SPACE OR TENACRES  
I SUGGEST THE POLLING STATION BUT PUT BACK AT THE SCHOOL BUT I SURE RBC WONT LISTEN \*PLEASE LISTEN TO THE RESIDENTS\*  
IT'S IN THE CENTRE - ACTUALLY IN THE MIDDLE FOR EAST AND WEST  
PARKING IS VERY GOOD  
PERFECT  
DON'T MIND EITHER  
IF POSSIBLE BACK AT TENACRES BUT COULD BE ANYWHERE FOR OLD PEOPLE TANACRES MAY BE BETTER  
EITHER  
EASIER TO GET TO  
I THINK IT IS A GOOD DECISION  
PERFECT LOCATION IN THE CENTRE  
SAVES CLOSING SCHOOL + FOR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION TO CONTINUE  
WHY HAVE 2 LOCATIONS AT WINYATES CENTRE, UNDERSTANDABLE FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS AS HISTORICALLY MORE VOTERS BUT ?? FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS  
BRILLIANT  
NOT BOTHERED EITHER WAY  
THIS IS FINE  
WE LIKED TENACRES ITS CLOSE TO WHERE WE LIVE BUT IT WAS OK AT THE SPACE  
TENACRES SCHOOL CAN STAY OPEN FOR THE KIDS ON POLLING DAY  
A CENTRAL LOCATION FOR RESIDENTS  
SILLY TO REMOVE THE POLLING STATION FROM THE SCHOOL AS THE SCHOOL IS CENTRAL THE CENTRE IS A BIT FAR FOR THE ELDERLY THAT LIVE IN MY AREA  
YES- IT ACTUALLY ALLOWS YOU NOT TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL FOR AN EXTRA DAY  
EASIER PERSONALLY FOR ME SO VERY HAPPY  
FINE  
BETTER AT TENACRES  
HANDY  
ITS EASY TO GET TO FOR EVEYONE AS ITS IN CENTRE AND ON BUS ROUTE ALSO  
MEANS SCHOOLS DON'T HAVE TO CLOSE  
IT SEEMS OK  
HAPPY TO COME HERE  
MORE CONVENIENT FOR ME



WIB



Comments regarding “The Link” Office WIB

BOTH THE LINK AND ARROW VALLEY FIRST SCHOOL ARE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE SO EITHER IS FINE  
 THE POLLING STATION NEEDS TO BE A LARGER PREMISES. AT THE LINK THERE MAY BE QUEUES TO ENTER THE  
 POLLING STATION WHICH IS IN A SMALL AREA  
 EXCELLENT

GOOD CENTRAL & CONVENIENT LOCATION - PLEASE KEEP  
 SAME AS ABOVE. WE RELY ON OUR LOCAL CENTRE IN THE SNOW AND THE PANDEMIC. WE NEED TO KEEP  
 USING IT. A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVEN’T BEEN TO WINYATES CENTRE. IT’LL MAKE THEM VISIT  
 I THINK THE LINK IS SUITABLE FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS BUT MAY BECOME OVERCROWDED AT BUSY TIMES OF  
 THE DAY

NO SUGGESTIONS

THERE WAS NOT ENOUGH ROOM IN THE LINK. IF IT WAS BUSY, IT WAS NOT PRIVATE ENOUGH

AS A POLL CLERK AT THIS VENUE NOT SUITABLE TO HAVE TO EAT AT THE FRONT DESK, WHEN VOTERS COME IN  
NONE  
FEELS LIKE I'M VOTING IN A SHOP  
ANY PERSON WITH MOBILITY ISSUES THE AREA IS RESTRICTED, FOR ENTERING THE POLLING STATION  
EASY TO GET IN  
NONE  
NOT SUITABLE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE  
MUCH BETTER MAYBE A LITTLE SMALL FOR PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY ISSUES BUT EASIER AND MORE  
CENTRAL ON THE WHOLE  
BIT SMALL  
YOU ARE IN AND OUT QUICKLY. ALSO FORCES LOCALS TO GO TO THE CENTRE WHICH SOME HAVEN'T  
A BIT SMALL  
PLENTY OF ROOM TO GET IN IN MY MOBILITY SCOOTER  
2 MINUTES AND THE WIFE AND MYSELF ARE THERE TO VOTE  
BIT SMALL  
TOO CONFINED  
I WOULD LIKE IT LEFT WHERE IT WAS  
WHY TWO PLACES? DIDN'T KNOW WHICH ONE  
NOT ENOUGH ROOM FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS (NEED PERSONAL TOILET FACILITIES I.E. MALE / FEMALE)  
THIS IS A SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE  
SAVES A SCHOOL HAVING TO SHUT FOR THE DAY  
TOO SMALL  
DIDN'T KNOW WHICH SHOP TO VOTE IN  
IT'S A BIT SMALL  
TOO SMALL IF WET  
MUCH BETTER THAN A 'WHOLE' SCHOOL  
EASY TO GET TO  
AT LEAST IT DOES NOT INTERRUPT THE SCHOOL CHILDREN'S EDUCATION  
STOPS CHILDREN HAVING TO HAVE A DAY OFF BECAUSE THE SCHOOL HAD TO CLOSE  
A LITTLE SMALL